

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Bielawa Backs Bill To Provide Access To Free And Reduced Cost Prescription Drugs



Hartford, CT- State Rep. Hank Bielawa, R-2nd, today expressed support for legislation that would establish a Pharmacy Outreach Program to inform underinsured or uninsured patients of help that may be available to them. House Bill 6854 would establish a Pharmacy Outreach Program within the UConn School of Pharmacy in order to assist residents in obtaining reduced cost or no cost prescription medications or nonprescription medications from participating manufacturers, and educating them about health care issues relating to their medications. The bill, which is also cosponsored by Rep. Bielawa, was presented during a press conference at the State Capitol complex on Thursday, March 10.

The legislation would create a single point of access for citizens by maintaining a state-wide toll free telephone number staffed by students from the UConn School of Pharmacy to counsel and advise eligible persons on how to access more than 275 public and private patient assistance programs, including more than 150 programs offered by pharmaceutical companies.

“There is no question that the high costs of prescription drugs puts a strain on household budgets,” said Rep. Bielawa. “By establishing this centralized system, the state can help people learn what assistance programs provide more affordable prescription medications, which will be especially beneficial to people on fixed incomes.”

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) has long-standing patient assistance programs that have been available through an interactive web site (www.HelpingPatients.org) that provides a comprehensive one-stop link to thousands of medicines offered through hundreds of patient assistance programs.

In 2004, millions of patients across America received over 22 million prescriptions from PhRMA patient assistance programs with a wholesale value topping \$4.17 billion. In 2003, over 18 million prescriptions were filled with an estimated wholesale value of \$3.4 billion.

The website helps direct patients to the patient assistance programs by maintaining a database of all the member companies that conduct patient assistance programs and

which medicines are covered. It also describes how to request assistance, provides direction on the application process, and explains eligibility requirements for each company and program. In 2003, the program helped 6.2 million underinsured and uninsured patients obtain more than 17.8 million prescriptions.

An example of current programs that would be accessed under the legislation are the Together Rx™ and Together Rx Access, which offer real savings on more than 430 FDA-approved brand-name prescriptions. The programs are available to individuals who lack public or private prescription drug coverage

The Together Rx™ and Together Rx Access participants may receive savings of approximately 20 percent to 40 percent, and in some cases more, on prescriptions for brand-name medicines. The companies are: Abbott, AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, members of the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, Novartis, Ortho-McNeil, sanofi-aventis Group, Pfizer, and Takeda and Tap.